

***What a Pupil has a Right to Expect  
as a Result of His High School  
Training in French and German.***



Reprint from the Report of  
the Dominion Educational  
Association, August, 1901.



***By A. B. YOUNG, M.A.,***  
***Trinity University, Toronto.***



1901.  
OTTAWA PRINTING CO., LIMITED.

**WHAT A PUPIL HAS A RIGHT TO EXPECT AS A  
RESULT OF HIS HIGH SCHOOL TRAINING  
IN FRENCH OR GERMAN.**

Professor A. H. YOUNG, M.A., Trinity University, Toronto.

The right of a pupil to have any expectations in this matter depends upon his own aims, ability, and application, his teacher's ideals, training, and sense of duty, and the limitations imposed upon both of them by time-tables, the length and character of the High School course, and the wearisome round of the ever-recurring examinations. Concerning the pupil who lacks ambition and linguistic capacity, and who is, moreover, incorrigibly idle, I have nothing to say, except that it is little short of a crime to keep him at school, wasting his father's money, his teacher's strength, and his own time. He ought to be made to realize by the wisest means that can be devised for him that he owes duties to society at large, and that only he has a right to live and enjoy life, who, in some useful way, is contributing to the good and the happiness of others.

The pupil, on the other hand, who has even moderate ambitions and, possibly, only indifferent mental endowments may, with honest endeavour, attain, under the guidance of a conscientious, high-minded, well-instructed teacher, to a good degree of proficiency in reading, writing, and, perhaps, speaking French and German, notwithstanding the limitations already referred to. Further than this he can scarcely hope to go under existing conditions, hence these limitations and the teacher's ideals would appear to be the main subjects for consideration at the present time.

**I.—TIME-TABLES.**

Three classes of limitations have been already mentioned,—time-tables, examinations, and the length and character of the High School course. To dwell long upon the construction of time-tables, and, in particular, to inveigh against headmasters, as is almost invariably done by most of those who deal with this subject, is

unprofitable. The difficulties of the problem increase with multiplication of options and diminution in the size of the staff.

In spite of the wide range of options allowed ten years ago in the senior forms of the secondary schools in Ontario, it was still possible at a large school like Upper Canada College to divide the working week into thirds of ten periods each, devoted respectively, at the rate of two periods a day, to Mathematics, Classics (with Ancient History), and Modern Languages (including English and English History). The proportion observed between French and German, on the one hand, and English and History, on the other, was as six to four, while science was adequately provided for by allowing boys wishing to take the subject to spend in the laboratory their spare hours from Trigonometry, Greek, French, or German, as the case might be.

It is not impossible that such a division of the day and week might work out well in a school with so few as three, or even two masters, in which, happily, the attempt is not made to teach every pupil in every period. Whether the attempt so to do is ever desirable may well be questioned. We are greatly in danger of teaching too much and of leaving the pupil, to his own hurt, to depend too little upon himself. This evil of over-teaching is undoubtedly due in no small measure to the second of the limitations to be considered—examinations.

## II.—EXAMINATIONS.

"Pupils must be passed," so I am assured by those who are most affected by the evil, or the teacher "loses his place," as the phrase goes. As odious a phrase it is as those others which are seen in the papers every day during the summer vacation:—"State salary expected"; "Wanted, a Male Teacher"; "Wanted, a Female Teacher." The last two savour somewhat of the old slave days, which are supposed to be gone for ever. But with schoolmasters and schoolmistresses of to-day it is, I fear, a supposition and nothing more. And they themselves have to bear at least part of the blame for the existing state of affairs.

Not only is the aim of the teacher lowered, perhaps insensibly, and independence stifled in the pupil, but a great deal of hasty (therefore bad) teaching and inaccuracy is the result. On the latter point I feel strongly, for I have just finished reading three sets of scholarship papers for the Universities of Ontario, the examination being conducted by the Education Department. Hardly one of the

candidates (about 120 in number) was able to give correctly common forms of verbs in general use occurring in the prescribed texts.

The imperative of the verb *s'asseoir*, conjugated either affirmatively or negatively, ought surely to be familiar to honour candidates for University scholarships, yet scarcely ten per cent. of them gave the verbal forms correctly. A larger percentage understood in a vague fashion that the order of the pronouns changed when the negative appeared, but they did not always manage to give their proper forms.

The nomenclature of the tenses is something apparently not taught in the majority of schools; and, I fear, the same must be said of the functions of the tenses also. In vain have I asked in years gone by for the perfect or the past indefinite of the indicative, giving the two names together. Candidate after candidate has thought the past definite was meant, while some have written the imperfect. This year I sought to avoid the difficulty of nomenclature by asking for the perfect of the infinitive, and in many cases the answers contained the past participle alone, while a few candidates gave forms such as *ayant tenu*.

The same kind of mistake was found also, and more frequently, in the answers to the German paper. But here the additional vice manifested itself, I should say in fully twenty-five per cent. of the papers, of writing *haben gesetzt* for *gesetzt haben*, while I became quite accustomed to the monstrosity *haben gewesen*.

It is not my intention to raise any discussion concerning the merits of the natural, as opposed to the grammatical method, or the reverse. To him who can use it, either of them is good, and every teacher must, after all, evolve his own method. But I do think that accuracy is a thing which we have a right to expect from our pupils, and which they in turn have a right to expect from us.

Whatever method of teaching may be adopted, the verbs in the texts read, and in the grammar, ought to be thoroughly drilled into the pupils, for it is wonderful what an extensive vocabulary anyone will have who has once mastered his verbs in either French or German. If the admirable hints for drill in the verbs which are thrown out in the new authorized grammars are utilized, this drill will not be irksome to either teacher or pupil, but, by means of the sentences used, it can be made to subserve admirably the purposes of conversation, as well as those of training both ear and tongue, all of which are to be desired.

Another sort of inaccuracy which has tried my patience recently is that arising out of imperfect assimilation of the vocabulary contained in the texts prescribed for examination. With wearisome iteration I heard, when I was discussing my papers with the associate examiners, the phrase, "But the candidate has the idea," even though he had, in my opinion, exhausted most, if not all, of the marks by mistakes due to crass ignorance and culpable approximation. This was in connection, it must be remembered, with passages that were to be prepared no less than those which were to be taken at sight. I may be wrong, but it does seem to me that no one, to use the phrase again, "has the idea," in the true meaning of the words, unless he can reproduce it in good, idiomatic English, with proper regard for literalness of translation. When next I examine for the Department I hope that it will not be necessary for me to argue this point again. I cannot but think the phrase an attempt to apologize for inaccuracy, which is, after all, carelessness and laziness. Both of these we, as teachers, ought to correct in our pupils, wherever we see them, for where they are there can be at best only absence of character.

### III.—EXAMINATION SUCCESS.

Character and love of knowledge we cannot expect to see growing up in our pupils if we teach for examinations alone, and if, in so doing, we lead them to believe that success (save the mark !) is the only thing worth having, no matter how it is attained. Love of the subject and a thorough determination to pursue it patiently, and in accordance with its own laws, after he leaves school, are far better worth striving to inspire in a pupil than a low desire for any amount of mere examination success. I have a theory, which I am glad to say others besides myself have often worked out in practice, that anyone who is filled with a love of French and German, and who is constantly increasing his own acquaintance with them will be rewarded by seeing this love and determination I have spoken of growing up in his pupils if he teaches the subjects without reference to examinations at all ; and he will not have to fear the day of publication of results either.

### IV.—LENGTH OF THE HIGH SCHOOL COURSE.

Whether it is customary now, as it used to be, for pupils to come without any previous knowledge of the subjects and request to be prepared for the Junior or the Senior Leaving Examination in



French and German in periods ranging from three to ten months, I cannot say. I sincerely hope it is not. There should be only one answer for such a pupil, and that is, it is impossible, unless you are a linguistic genius. None but a genius could in one school year (much less in a shorter time) begin to have any conception of what is meant by language study and by the laws of a language, to which he must conform who wishes to really learn anything of it.

If, instead of two Leaving Examinations, there were only one, which should be such in reality, and not in name merely, for the vast majority of our High School pupils, we should be the better able to work out our ideals without distraction. The majority of the pupils, it cannot be too often said, are neither prospective teachers nor prospective university students.

Again, if none but those who had taken the whole High School course were permitted to present themselves for this simplified Leaving Examination, the position of affairs would be further improved. This would be the case especially if the Entrance Examination were abolished and those who might wish to study the languages were thus placed in a position that would enable them to begin them early without any fear of spending at least four, if not six, years or more upon them.

After a somewhat long experience, four years seem to me the fewest possible in which to do for a pupil leaving school for good that which will enable him to go on by himself with the study of modern languages, or indeed, with any of the other subjects of study. Once more let it be said, that ought to be the objective of our High School course; and it can hardly be maintained with due regard to truth-telling, that it is so to-day.

#### V.—CHARACTER OF THE COURSE.

In Germany it is found possible to give the pupils of the *Real-Schulen*, in which modern languages (French and German), are compulsory, in the *Gymnasien*, in which they are optional, and in the *Tochter-Schulen*, a good grammatical training, a considerable amount of practice in conversation, the usual exercises in translating into and out of the vernacular, together with two things which we do not attempt at all, some general ideas concerning the history of literature and information about the history, institutions, social customs, legends, etc., of the nations speaking the languages in question. Professor Storm, who, though a Dane, holds the German views of

language study, makes, in his great work on English Phonetics, a characteristic remark, in a foot-note which his German translator faithfully reproduces. Criticizing a certain work on the same subject, he writes somewhat as follows: "It is a pity the author has not traced the evolution of the English dinner-hour. In Queen Elizabeth's time we know that it was noon; in the earlier part of the 19th century we know, from Dickens, that it was as late as five o'clock, while now it is seven, half-past seven, eight, or later. Tracing the causes of these changes would have been a valuable contribution to the science of Phonetics." What the connection between the two may be, specialists in Phonetics must be left to determine; my concern is with the fact that nothing is too trivial to be deemed of some importance in the study of languages. Does not this study thus understood become an intensely interesting thing, an intensely human thing, and an infinitely more useful means of culture, in the true sense of that much abused word, than it is when it is made a mere cram for an examination, with the scantest possible attention to the right use of those two indispensable tools, the grammar and the dictionary?

As we should hardly be willing to be called poorer or less clever than the Germans, the course which we ought to aim at introducing, by degrees, into our High Schools would take account of grammar, conversation, translation from and into English, broad outlines of French and German, and studies in *Landeskunde*, as the Germans call it. The last-mentioned could be taught from the teacher's own experience, or from his reading, as I heard being done in a course on English, Colonial, and American Universities delivered in English by a distinguished graduate of Glasgow University, who is Lector in English at the University of Stassburg. Or the teaching could be based upon text-books (for one would not be sufficient) as is often done in Germany.

The only attempt at such a book on this side of the Atlantic, so far as I know, is Herr Stern's *Geschichten vom Rhein*, published by the American Book Company, of New York. It is doubtless known to many of you through the courtesy of the publishers; and you will probably agree with me that it would be hard to devise anything more interesting as a first reader in German. The whole Rhine is traversed from Switzerland to Holland, and very many of the most interesting legends are narrated. The pleasures of memory, and, possibly, of travel in days to come, would be increased tenfold for

pupils using such books, while now, as we know only too well, the tendency, in too many cases is to hasten straightway to forget what was learned at school as having no connection with life in general. Too frequently the thirst for knowledge is quenched forever, instead of being deepened and increased.

So far as translation is concerned, it seems to me that, for the sake of securing the accuracy I have already insisted upon as a desideratum, one, but not more than one, text ought to be prescribed in any one year of the course. From personal experience and from observation, I should say that it is impossible for the average pupil to assimilate more than one book, and, at the same time, to pay proper attention to oral exercises and grammatical drill.

So long as we have the present unsatisfactory arrangement of the Leaving Examinations, which I look upon as only temporary and as preparatory to something better, it cannot do much harm to have two books for the Senior Leaving Examination, for it is supposed to represent at least two years of work. When the better day dawns, not only the course, but the character of the examinations will have to be changed, in order to take account, as opportunity offers, of such things as I have here set down as desirable.

#### VII.—MODERN LANGUAGES AND BUSINESS.

My subject confines me to High Schools and the average pupil in them—the chief care, and yet, in a manner, the curse of our whole educational system in Ontario. We are trying, as it were, with one and the same set of machinery, to manufacture articles intended for uses as far apart from one another as kitchen crockery is from webs of finest silk. If I were speaking of commercial courses and Business Colleges, to which the former ought to be transferred, I should speak of commercial and journalistic French and German. With increasing interprovincial and international trade, there can be little doubt that an ever-increasing demand will be made for clerks with a thorough knowledge of these languages, and perhaps of Spanish and Italian also.

If we had anything corresponding to the *Real-Schulen* of Germany, or even a respectable number of technical schools, I might speak of the relation of modern languages to manufactures. We have only the High Schools (and Collegiate Institutes), and they are for culture purposes alone—a fact which should never be lost sight of. We must stand firm upon the ground that the educational system is not intended to prepare boys and girls to earn a living,



but through their studies and their intercourse with men and women of character and education, in the fullest sense of the term, to train their intelligence and develop their character to such an extent as shall enable them to profit speedily by the further processes of training that are to fit them for earning a livelihood, and shall enable them likewise to adapt themselves readily to the ever-changing conditions of life in such a way as to perform honestly and honourably the various duties devolving upon them.

#### VII.—CHARACTER.

What the old Bishop was as a man, Jean Valjean was inspired to become by his brief contact with him. The story of his "becoming" is, I suppose, Victor Hugo's main theme in "Les Misérables," while in "Quatre-Vingt-Treize" he makes special application of this idea of spiritual fatherhood to the relation of master and pupil in the characters of Gauvain and Cimourdain. If there is any truth in this idea, and few will deny the fact, it behooves us teachers to know well what manner of men we are and ought to be.

#### VIII.—INTERRELATION OF KNOWLEDGE.

Teachers of modern languages, perhaps more than any other men and women, except the teachers of History, ought to have a sense of the interrelation of the various branches of knowledge.

The classical man may, and sometimes does, look down upon the modern languages as not being worthy of his pursuit. In that he makes a great mistake, for no man can be counted a thorough classical scholar nowadays, if he does not know something at first hand of French and German criticism and archæological research, while his so-called philology, as still treated in some universities, is woefully incomplete without a study of the variations from the old Latin forms presented in the successive stages of the Romance languages. Yet the classical man who lacks a knowledge of modern languages is no worse than the teacher or student of modern languages who thinks that the *Strassburg Oaths* are the real beginning of the life of the world. Without Latin at least, Romance philology is ridiculous, and much of French literature (to speak of no other) difficult, if not impossible, to appreciate.

Classicist and Modern have fought in Ontario in the days gone by, and I am not sure that the fight is over yet. Instead of so doing, they ought to have been working together as those whose

cause is one for the advancement of the interests of education generally, and they ought to have been learning from each other methods of instruction in their favourite subjects of study.

History and philosophy touch all departments of human knowledge at so many points that, without them, study of the literature and language of any nation, ancient or modern, has next to no meaning. Without Kant, where were Schiller? And without Comte, where were Taine and many another writer of France in the last century? To the philosophers and historians, then, we are under obligation, which, happily, we can in some sort repay, for no philosopher now can do his work without German, and in my opinion, without French also. To him who would study the history of Canada, French is absolutely necessary, while the body of historical literature in this country would be much less than it is, were it not for the work that has been done in the province of Quebec.

The great mathematicians and the great men of science in France and Germany, together with their great inventors, have made it impossible, as we all know, for students, manufacturers, and business men to disregard their work. Once again, we students and teachers of modern languages have a part to play in this co-operative work of education and of facilitating the increase of the sum of human knowledge. In return we gain from the men of science and the mathematicians the benefits of their method. Moreover, if we will but let them have their full influence, we may have the benefit of learning from our study of the best French writers, from Pascal onward, the merits of clear expression, due, on the one hand, to clear, logical thinking, and, on the other, to the fact that the language itself was fashioned by the thinkers to make their thoughts clear to the ordinary man.

Having regard, then, to the mutual relations of such importance which exist between modern languages and other departments of study, we ought to set our faces resolutely against everything that looks like undue depreciation of any given subject of study, whether it is the broad, abstract question that is being discussed, or simply one of time-table, or the course a pupil is to take. In regard to the last-mentioned, I am afraid that predilections of principals or masters often have more to do with the decision than the pupil's own tastes and aptitudes.

### IX.—INTERNATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Bearing in mind that, generally speaking, we are, to a certain extent, the interpreters of the thoughts and ideals of nation to nation, we ought to remember in times of quiet as well as of crisis, that other nations besides the British have their appointed work to do, that our ways are not their ways, and that ours are not of necessity better than theirs. To cultivate respect for individuals while we hold views different from theirs, is counted a praiseworthy thing. Why the same rule should not apply to nations, I fail to see. Moreover, there are many things we might well learn from France and Germany, to mention only everyday things, such as respect, courtesy, thrift, and finding happiness in simple pleasures. This mental attitude, then, is another of those things which I hold that the pupil has a right to expect from his High School course in French and German.

### X.—NATIONAL CONCERNS.

Following out this same train of thought, and applying it nearer home, let me say that, in building up our Canadian nation, we who teach French have an important part to play. I shall not say German this time, for the same considerations do not apply to it with the same force as to French.

In the main we have in the nation the two constituent parts, French and Anglo-Saxon (or Anglo-Celtic, as some say) descended, to a certain extent, from a common stock, whether we go back to the Northland from which both sprang, or only to the eleventh century, when the one which now calls itself in its pride the dominant race was then the vanquished. It took three hundred years to weld the English and the Normans into one nation. Shall we grumble when we have done so much in a hundred and fifty?

We who are of Scotch or Irish extraction have no right to countenance in any way either aggressive talk or aggressive action when the rights of the French Canadians, guaranteed to them by solemn pledges, are attacked. We should remember how the respective Acts of Union are viewed, even at this late date, in Edinburgh and Dublin. As our kinsfolk in the old homeland have set themselves by intellect and valour to make the term "dominant partner" a misnomer, and have largely succeeded, as witness Mr. Balfour and Lord Rosebery, together with Lords Wolseley and Roberts, let us on

this side of the Atlantic not grudge to our French fellow subjects, especially of Quebec, all the honours they have won at home or abroad, thus bringing fresh glory to the Canadian name.

For the sake of the Canada that is to be, let us work on side by side, with the strictest regard for old promises and present rights, striving to outdo each other only in that which is for the country's good. If we go down before the others, it will be only because we shall deserve to do so, disagreeable though the thought may be.

Because of the great influence which teachers generally may have in promoting peace and goodwill I have ventured to speak of these matters here. Because of the Language question involved, I go further, for that is the sphere of the modern language teacher particularly.

#### XI.—BI-LINGUAL COMMUNITIES.

In mixed communities, such as Ottawa, Montreal, and Quebec, how much it would conduce to a kindly feeling if the population were even approximately bi-lingual, as is the case in Western and Northern Switzerland and in South-Western Germany! Following the example of the Englishman, our people usually speak one language only, a custom which is not to be commended. If we do not choose to change the custom, let us also follow his worthy example in the matter of the Welsh and Gaelic languages; and, in view of its projected revival in the schools of Ireland, let us not make over much of the recent refusal to allow Erse to be spoken in the House of Commons at Westminster.

#### XII.—PRACTICAL TEACHING.

In communities where the two nationalities meet they cannot be expected to commingle at once any more than do the Ottawa and the St. Lawrence at their confluence, fitting emblems of the two. But in such communities the teaching of French should be made as practical as possible, while, considering that education ought always to bear some relation to the needs of the nation, that language should be taught more and more throughout the whole country.

Here would come in also the utility of my plea for *Landeskunde* which would supply what is sometimes lacking in the teaching of history. It has, unfortunately, become too much a question of constitutions and legislative enactments. To obtain the requisite knowledge, teachers would have to go to the Province of Quebec, unless some wretched text-book were devised, from which may we be delivered!



During these sojourns in Quebec teachers would learn more of the spoken language. Why the Education Department does not require residence in French and German settlements, I fail to see. If visits to Europe were possible, so much the better. They being impracticable in many cases, it would be well to require of specialists such an addition to their academic training as that just mentioned. The average of good French in the Province of Quebec, and of good German, say, in the county of Waterloo, is, upon the whole, as high as the average of good English, I take it, in this or any other English-speaking province. However, if it were not what it is, anyone who had been well trained in the languages might go with impunity to either of the districts mentioned, for he would know how to choose the good and leave the bad.

With teachers properly trained (as numbers of them already are), filled also with enthusiasm for their subject and their work, informed by a proper conception of what the study of a language means, and animated by a desire to be useful, in the highest and best of ways, to their country, there would be practically no limitation, except his own immaturity and will-power, to the expectations which a pupil might fairly hope to have realized during his course of study in the French and German of the High Schools, given, of course, the removal of the drawbacks now offered by the three sets of limitations herein considered. And, in the best, the only right sense of the word, he would be a cultured man, for he would have learned not only to love and to continue his studies after leaving school, but, through them, he would have learned how to discharge his duties to himself, to society, and to his country.



